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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999

Second report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report contains the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the report of the Secretary-General of 11 September 1997 (A/52/303). Taking these into account, it also presents a consolidated table of the appropriations it recommends for each section of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The report also includes a number of observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on related budgetary matters. The Committee also had before it the report of the Secretary-General of 14 July 1997 (A/51/950 and Add.1-6). During its consideration of document A/52/303 and related matters the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information both orally and in writing.

II. UNITED NATIONS REFORM: MEASURES AND PROPOSALS (A/52/303)

2. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 52/12 of 12 November 1997, the General Assembly notes that the report of the Secretary-General of 11 September 1997 will be considered in the context of the examination of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The Advisory Committee points out that in some cases, as noted below, the Secretary-General's report (A/52/303) contains estimates in respect of recommendations still to be acted upon by the Assembly as at the time of writing of this report. During its consideration of the Secretary-General's report, the Committee encountered some difficulty in reviewing the report owing to lack of satisfactory explanation of some of the proposals made in it. The Committee requests the Secretary-General to make

available information on the implications of reform on the level and distribution of extrabudgetary resources as soon as possible.

Section 1A. Overall policy-making, direction and coordination

3. As at the time of writing of this report, the recommendation of the Secretary-General to establish a post of Deputy Secretary-General has not yet been acted upon by the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 1A.2 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303) that it is proposed that the Deputy Secretary-General would be a staff member appointed by the Secretary-General for a period not to exceed his own term of office. With regard to remuneration, it is proposed that the salary of the Deputy Secretary-General be set at the mid-point between that of the Secretary-General and that of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); a representation allowance would be set at $15,000 per year.

4. The Advisory Committee requested a breakdown of the estimates for the Deputy Secretary-General post for 1998-1999 and received the following information:

	United States dollars
Salary	421 800
Representation allowance	30 000
Common staff costs	169 300
Total	621 100

5. It would appear to the Advisory Committee that should the General Assembly establish the post of Deputy Secretary-General along the lines recommended by the Secretary-General in his report of 14 July (A/51/950) and further elaborated in his report of 7 October (A/51/950/Add.1), two options exist with regard to the salary and emoluments for that post:

(a) To recognize that the creation of the grade of Deputy Secretary-General changes the grading structure of the staffing tables through the addition of a new layer. Since such a change has numerous implications, not only for the United Nations, but system-wide, the matter could be referred to the International Civil Service Commission on an urgent basis; the Commission could make recommendations on salary and all other conditions of service, including pension, and applicability to the grading structure of the other organizations in the common system;

(b) To set salary and emoluments the same as those of an Under-Secretary-General, but to provide a special non-pensionable allowance in recognition of the special responsibilities of the position, in addition to the existing representation allowance of an Under-Secretary-General; thus, the incumbent would have the grade of Under-Secretary-General but the title of Deputy Secretary-General (together with a special allowance); a new grade layer would thus not be created.

6. If, however, the General Assembly were to approve the position of Deputy Secretary-General, but require instead that the incumbent be selected with the participation and/or approval of the Assembly, then the incumbent could be considered an ungraded official with salary and emoluments specifically approved by the Assembly (as is the case with the Administrator of UNDP); options (a) and (b) in paragraph 5 above would therefore not apply.

7. The Advisory Committee will revert to the question of the financial implications of the establishment of the position of Deputy Secretary-General on the basis of such decision as the General Assembly may take on this matter. Pending this, the Committee recommends that the Secretary-General's estimates in respect of the post of Deputy Secretary-General in his report (A/52/303) be considered provisional.

8. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 1A.3 of the Secretary-General's report under consideration that the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General would consist of one Director (D-2), one P-5 and one personal assistant and two secretaries in the General Service category. The Committee was informed that travel requirements for the Office would be met through resources available to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. As indicated in paragraph 1A.3, the Deputy Secretary-General would also draw on the staff resources available in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. In view of this, should the General Assembly approve the establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee does not believe that three General Service posts would be required in the Office and recommends only two of these posts (one of which would be provided through redeployment); this would involve a reduction of $112,200 in the Secretary-General's estimates for 1998-1999.

9. The Committee recommends acceptance of the staffing proposals on the Strategic Planning Unit and the Office for Development Financing as described in paragraphs 1A.4 to 1A.6 of the report.

Section 1B. General Assembly affairs and conference services

10. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 1B.1 of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/303) that the major function of the newly created Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would be the servicing of the General Assembly, its General, First, Second, Third and Fourth Committees, the Economic and Social Council and most of its subsidiary and ad hoc bodies and special conferences dealing with economic, social and related matters. On enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, for the present time, the servicing of the Fifth and Sixth Committees of the Assembly would not be undertaken by this Department. The distinction between the servicing arrangements for the Fifth and Sixth Committees and the other Main Committees of the Assembly was not made clear to the Advisory Committee. Since the rationalization of servicing arrangements could result in economies, the Committee recommends that these arrangements be kept under review; the review should include arrangements for servicing the Security Council.

11. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 1B.4 of the report, that there is no change in the programme of activities of the various components now

forming the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. The Committee, while noting the information given in paragraph 1B.12 of the report, enquired about the proposed reduction of nine posts. The Committee was informed that currently one post in the Professional category was vacant, while it was envisaged that the remaining five Professional posts would become vacant in due course and that the incumbents of the three posts in the General Service category would be redeployed.

12. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 1B.8 that it is proposed that the post of Director (D-2) in the former Office of the Director of Conference Services be redeployed to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General to strengthen the latter Office. It is also proposed to reclassify the post from D-2 to the Assistant Secretary-General level. The Advisory Committee has no objection to the reclassification.

13. The Advisory Committee has no objection to the proposed reclassification from the P-4 to the P-5 level of the post of Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General as indicated in paragraph 1B.9 of the Secretary-General's report. The Committee recommends acceptance of the Secretary-General's proposal, in paragraph 1B.11 of his report, for reclassification of a P-2 post to the P-3 level for the purpose of enhancing administrative support in the Executive Office.

14. As indicated in paragraph 1B.11, the Secretary-General had proposed that the post of Executive Officer at the D-1 level in the new Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services be provided through the exchange of the current P-5 post with a D-1 post in the General Assembly Subsidiary Organs Servicing Branch within the same Department. The Advisory Committee was informed that this Branch had been renamed the General Assembly, Disarmament and Decolonization Organs Servicing Branch.

15. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 1B.5 of the report that it is proposed to transfer resources relating to subprogramme 6, Decolonization, to section 1B, the new Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. In this connection, the Advisory Committee points out that, as indicated in table 2.27 of the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999,[1] six posts (one D-1, one P-5, one P-3/4 and three General Service (Other level)) had been proposed for subprogramme 6, Decolonization. The Advisory Committee was informed that, in accordance with the information contained in the Secretary-General's letters of 24 October 1997, addressed to the Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/51/521), and of 28 October 1997, addressed to the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations (A/52/531), substantive responsibilities for the decolonization programme would be maintained in the Department of Political Affairs. It was not clear to the Committee, however, which of the six posts (other than the D-1 post) would be transferred back to the Department of Political Affairs (sect. 2A) from the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (sect. 1B). During the Committee's consideration of the issue, the representatives of the Secretary-General were not able to provide additional information with regard to other staff and non-staff resources that would be provided to the stand-alone

Decolonization Unit mentioned in the Secretary-General's letters. The Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General indicate how these resources will be deployed pursuant to the intention in his letters. This information should be provided to the Fifth Committee in the context of its consideration of his report (A/52/303).

16. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 2.101 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 that the functions assigned to the D-1 post would provide concurrently for the Secretary of the Fourth Committee, the supervision of activities relating to subprogramme 6. The Advisory Committee requests that the Fifth Committee be provided with information as to whether the functions of the Secretary of the Fourth Committee would be carried out within the Decolonization Unit or elsewhere.

17. The Advisory Committee recalls its comments in paragraph I.6 of chapter II of its first report (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part I)) that there was a need to ensure that the Office of the President of the General Assembly was provided with adequate resources. The Committee notes that resources for the support currently provided are reflected in paragraphs 2.15 and 2.17 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

18. The Advisory Committee requested a breakdown of the support currently provided and was informed that, during sessions of the General Assembly, the services of a Spokesperson at the D-1 level, a security officer, two drivers, two secretaries and temporary assistance equivalent to two or three additional secretaries, inclusive of related overtime costs of the temporary staff recruited, are assigned exclusively to the President of the Assembly. In addition, all notes, background reports and advice are made available to the President as well as hospitality funds for official functions extended by him/her during sessions of the Assembly. The President is also provided with a suite (1,834 square feet), class A furniture and a limousine as needed.

19. As indicated in table 1B.4 of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/303), an amount of $500,000 has been included under the budget line grants and contributions. The Advisory Committee was informed that the amount related to paragraph 1B.10 of the report, which states that in order to enhance further the ability of the President of the General Assembly to discharge his/her responsibilities, an amount of $250,000 per annum had been proposed to supplement the level of support currently provided.

20. The Advisory Committee welcomes this proposal; however, the Committee does not believe that these resources should have been categorized as "grants and contributions". The Advisory Committee recommends that, starting with the biennium 1998-1999, resources for the Office of the President of the General Assembly be presented and approved on an object of expenditure basis.

Section 2A. Political affairs

21. In his letters of 24 and 28 October 1997 (A/52/521 and A/52/531), the Secretary-General stated that substantive responsibilities for the decolonization programme would be maintained in the Department of Political

Affairs and that a stand-alone Decolonization Unit with the necessary resources would be established (see paras. 15 and 16 above).

22. In paragraph II.15 of chapter II of its first report on the proposed programme budget (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part II)), the Advisory Committee stated that it would provide further comments on the redeployment of a P-5 post to assist with the Department's role as convenor of the Executive Committee for Peace and Security. The Advisory Committee was informed that the Department had undertaken its designated responsibilities in this regard since January 1997. The Committee has no objection to the proposal, but the continuing need of the post for this function should be monitored in the light of experience.

23. Notwithstanding its role as convenor of the Executive Committee for Peace and Security (see A/51/950, para. 66), as well as its other functions as indicated in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.7 of the proposed programme budget, the Advisory Committee notes the proposed changes and consequent decrease in resources and functions of the Department of Political Affairs, as well as the decreasing number of operations to be undertaken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Advisory Committee enquired into the implications of a continuation of that trend insofar as the rationale for having two separate departments is conceived - an issue that may have to be re-examined by the Secretary-General. In that connection, the Advisory Committee had the benefit of an exchange of views with the Secretary-General, who informed the Advisory Committee that the Department of Political Affairs was involved in a political and advocacy role, while the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was involved in operational functions. While the Committee does not question the continued existence of two separate departments, the Committee trusts that all possible efforts will be made to avoid duplication and overlapping in their day-to-day work and believes that the efficacy of their continuing separate existence should be kept under review.

Section 2B. Disarmament

24. In paragraph 2B.2 of his report (A/52/303), the Secretary-General proposed that the Department of Disarmament Affairs be headed by an Under-Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee has no objection to this proposal. The Committee notes from paragraph 2B.3 of the report the proposed transfer of staff and non-staff resources from the Department of Political Affairs to the new Department.

25. The Advisory Committee was informed that the organizational chart for section 2B in annex II to the Secretary-General's report was outdated and that a new organigram reflecting more accurately the proposed branches of the Department would be provided in due course. The Committee has requested information on the implications of the recent change in the name of the Department.

Section 6. Legal affairs

26. The Committee notes that the Secretary-General, in paragraph 6.36 of the initial proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/6 (Sect. 6)), proposed to reclassify a D-1 regular budget post to the D-2 level to accommodate the Director and Deputy to the Legal Counsel, who currently occupies a D-2 post funded from extrabudgetary resources. The Advisory Committee, in paragraph III.20 of chapter II of its first report (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part III)), recommended this reclassification.

27. The Committee also notes, as indicated in paragraph 6.1 of his report, that the Secretary-General proposes to reclassify the D-2 post in the Office of the Legal Counsel to the Assistant Secretary-General level to strengthen the Office of Legal Affairs in the implementation of its programme, to assist the Legal Counsel in the increasing activity of the Legal Office and to provide assistance in the provision of overall direction, supervision and management of all legal activities under programme 4, Legal affairs, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.[2]

28. The Advisory Committee is not convinced of the need to reclassify the D-2 post to the Assistant Secretary-General level. It is of the opinion that the reasons given, such as the increasing activity of the Legal Office in relation to the reform process and necessary absences from Headquarters of the Legal Counsel, do not provide sufficient justification for a permanent increase in workload that would warrant such a reclassification.

Section 7A. Economic and social affairs

29. Under section 7A, the Secretary-General estimates regular budget requirements of $104,256,200 (before recosting) for the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs. As indicated in paragraph 7A.2, the new Department resulted from the consolidation of the Departments for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (sect. 7), Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (sect. 9) and Development Support and Management Services (sect. 10). The Secretary-General had estimated resource requirements of $117,914,900 for those three Departments in his initial proposal for the biennium 1998-1999 (see also A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part IV), paras. IV.2 and IV.3).

30. As shown in table 7A.3 of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/303), of the 602 posts requested under sections 7, 9 and 10 in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, the Secretary-General proposes to transfer 515 posts (285 Professional and 230 General Service) to the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs under section 7A, one P-5 post to the Office of the Secretary-General under section 1A, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination, 30 posts (1 USG, 2 D-1, 4 P-5, 4 P-4, 5 P-3 and 14 GS) to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services under section 1B, as well as the abolition of 56 posts (1 USG, 2 D-2, 3 P-5, 6 P-4, 1 P-3 and 43 GS). The Secretary-General also proposes the establishment of a new post at the Assistant Secretary-General level for the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs (see para. 7A.1).

31. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 7A.2 that the activities outlined in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999,[1] which

included 10 subprogrammes under sections 7, 9 and 10, have been merged into 8 subprogrammes of the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs (see A/52/303, paras. 7A.14-7A.53). Annex III to the Secretary-General's report describes the activities to be undertaken under section 7A, Economic and social affairs. The Committee requested the resource requirements of each subprogramme of the new Department for the biennium 1998-1999, but the information was not readily available. The Committee recommends that such information be presented to the General Assembly to facilitate the consideration and approval of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

32. The Advisory Committee points out that the report of the Secretary-General does not describe fully the measures taken by the Secretariat in order to guarantee the implementation of the activities related to technical cooperation executed by the former Department for Development Support and Management Services. The Committee was informed that, according to the new structure, the activities related to technical cooperation would be executed by the substantive units of the new Department; according to representatives of the Secretary-General, this would permit field and analytical experience to be combined. Although the Committee received some information in this regard, it requests the Secretary-General to report on the specific distribution of resources devoted to the management and implementation of technical cooperation (including the regular programme under current section 21). Furthermore, the Advisory Committee stresses the need to maintain the capacity of the Organization to execute the technical cooperation programme and recommends that the staffing resources for those activities be kept under review.

33. The proposed staffing requirements of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs are addressed in paragraphs 7A.11 to 7A.13 of the Secretary-General's report. In paragraph 7A.13, it is indicated that the Under-Secretary-General will be assisted in the exercise of his overall responsibilities for the management and coordination of the Department's work by an Assistant Secretary-General. For the reasons indicated in the report, the Committee has no objection to the establishment of the proposed new post of Assistant Secretary-General.

34. The corresponding proposed transfers of resources from sections 7, 9 and 10 to section 7A are as follows: (a) those from section 7, with the exception of the 23 posts (1 D-1, 4 P-5, 3 P-4, 5 P-3 and 10 GS) and related resources from the technical servicing area of the former Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, which are proposed for redeployment to section 1B, and a P-5 post that is proposed for transfer to the Office for Development Financing under section 1A; (b) those from section 9, with the exception of the post of the Under-Secretary-General, which is proposed for abolition; and (c) those from section 10, with the exception of 7 posts and related resources under executive direction and management (1 USG, 1 D-1, 1 P-4 and 4 GS), which are proposed for transfer to section 1B (see A/52/303, paras. 7A.9, 7A.11 and 7A.17).

35. As indicated in paragraphs 7A.59 and 7A.60, with regard to programme support requirements, the combination of the Executive Offices of the former Departments under sections 7, 9 and 10 into a new consolidated Executive Office under section 7A would result in staffing requirements of 14 posts (1 D-1,

2 P-5, 3 P-4/3 and 8 GS) in order to provide personnel, finance, resource planning and general administrative services to the organizational units of the Department. Thus, the merging of the offices would permit the overall reduction of 27 programme support posts (4 Professional and 23 General Service). The Advisory Committee notes that the proposal includes the reclassification of a P-5 post to the D-1 level. While the Committee has no objection to the proposed post reclassification and abolitions, it requests that this situation be monitored so as to ensure the capacity of the new Executive Office fully to carry out all the functions of the former Executive Offices in the three Departments.

36. The Advisory Committee requests the Secretary-General to provide complete information on the status of extrabudgetary posts assigned to the former three Departments. In that connection, the Advisory Committee understands that the procurement function of the former Department for Development Support and Management Services, which was carried out on an extrabudgetary basis, is to be transferred to the Procurement Division of the Department of Management, also on an extrabudgetary basis; the Advisory Committee requests the Secretary-General to provide all relevant information in this regard to the General Assembly.

Section 14. Crime control

37. Under section 14 of the proposed programme budget, the Secretary-General estimates revised regular budget requirements of $5,924,700 (before recosting) for the biennium 1998-1999 for the new Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, as compared with $5,411,300 in the initial proposal for the biennium 1998-1999 (see A/52/303, table 14.1).

38. The new Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention comprises the Centre for International Crime Prevention (the former Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (A/52/303, para. 14.1). The Advisory Committee requested an organigram of this new Office but it was not provided; it should be submitted to the General Assembly during its consideration of the proposed programme budget.

39. The Advisory Committee notes that two new posts (one P-5 and one P-4) are proposed to strengthen the Centre's capacity to deal with issues related to terrorism. Upon request, the Committee was provided with job descriptions for the two posts. The Committee has no objection to the establishment of the two new posts, but trusts that the addition of this new function will not have a negative impact on the activities of the Centre in other areas.

40. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in paragraph IV.63 of chapter II of its first report (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part IV)), it indicated that, from the information provided, it believed that convincing arguments had not yet been stated in support of the redeployment of one D-1 post from the United Nations Office at Vienna to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division (now the Centre for International Crime Prevention). On the basis of the additional information provided, the Committee has no objection to the redeployment.

Section 22. Human rights

41. In paragraph 22.2 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303), it is proposed to reclassify the post of the Head of the New York Office from the D-1 level to D-2. The Advisory Committee recommends acceptance of the Secretary-General's request. It notes from paragraph 22.5 of the report that it is proposed to reclassify a P-5 post in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the D-1 level to serve as Special Assistant to the High Commissioner and to abolish two General Service posts. The Advisory Committee has no objection to the abolition of the two General Service posts. With regard to the post of Special Assistant to the High Commissioner, the Advisory Committee recommends against the reclassification.

Section 25. Humanitarian assistance

42. In paragraph 25.6 (a) of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303), under subprogramme 1, Policy and analysis, it is proposed to transfer demining activities, including the management of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, currently amounting to around $30 million, to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the transfer was effected on 13 October 1997. The Committee was also informed that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would deal with the humanitarian aspect of demining. The Advisory Committee notes that there is no information on how this function would be implemented by the Department. It requested information, including an organigram, showing how this function would be implemented by the Department, but this information was not received; it should be provided to the Fifth Committee. The Advisory Committee also requests the Secretary-General to provide an indication of total resources (including staff) devoted to demining in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. This information should be provided to the Fifth Committee at its current session. The Advisory Committee is also concerned about the appropriateness of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations dealing with the humanitarian aspect of demining, which is mainly connected with capacity-building. In that regard, the Committee recommends that the implementation of the function be monitored carefully.

43. The Advisory Committee trusts that, as indicated in paragraph 25.6 (b) of the report of the Secretary-General, adequate capacity will be maintained in the Geneva Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to maintain liaison with relevant specialized agencies and other organizations. In this connection, the Committee notes from the report that 12 regular budget and 40 extrabudgetary posts would remain in the Coordinator's Geneva Office.

44. With regard to the proposed provision of $2.3 million as a contribution to UNDP, as described in paragraph 25.7 of the Secretary-General's report, the Advisory Committee points out that this derives from the recommendation of the Secretary-General to transfer the Emergency Relief Coordinator's responsibilities related to the coordination of natural disaster mitigation activities to UNDP. As of the writing of this report, this recommendation has not yet been acted upon by the General Assembly. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that if the recommendation of the Secretary-General was

accepted, then, as indicated under subprogramme 3, Natural disaster reduction (see A/52/303, para. 25.6), the coordination of operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness, which are mainly capacity-building, including the Disaster Management Training Programme, would be transferred to UNDP and activities relating to the implementation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction under this subprogramme would remain the responsibility of the Coordinator.

45. The Advisory Committee was also informed that the amount of $2.3 million, which is equivalent to the cost of the nine posts under the regular budget that deal with capacity-building, would be transferred to UNDP as a one-time grant to enable UNDP to make the transition. The Committee is of the opinion that this matter needs to be clarified, since if it is decided that UNDP will carry out this function on behalf of the United Nations, then a permanent subvention would be needed; the effect on the medium-term plan of an adoption by the General Assembly of the Secretary-General's recommendation should also be explained. The nine regular budget posts under section 25 (see table 25.13 of the proposed programme budget) that deal with capacity-building and disaster management training (subprogramme 3) would be abolished. The Advisory Committee was further informed that the Trust Fund for Technical Cooperation Activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, amounting to $12.4 million, would also be transferred to UNDP. It remains unclear to the Committee how the amount of $908,200 for national disaster reduction under current section 21 of the proposed programme budget (para. 21.40) would be managed, given the abolition of the nine posts. The Advisory Committee was further informed that the activities relating to the implementation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which are the only activities under subprogramme 3 not being transferred to UNDP, would be met exclusively from the Trust Fund for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which amounts to $10.9 million and which would remain with the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

46. In connection with the statement in paragraph 25.7 of the Secretary-General's report concerning secondments from concerned United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Committee trusts that this will be carried out in full compliance with General Assembly resolution 51/243 of 15 September 1997 on gratis personnel.

Section 26. Communications and public information

47. As indicated in paragraphs 26.1 and 26.2 of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/303), the Department of Public Information will be transformed into an Office of Communications and Public Information to be headed at the Under-Secretary-General level, in order to ensure a strong central leadership for the direction and coordination of the new unified communications strategy. The Advisory Committee concurs in the proposal by the Secretary-General to reclassify the existing Assistant Secretary-General post to the level of Under-Secretary-General.

48. The Advisory Committee points out that the report of the Secretary-General should have contained a more complete description of those recommendations of

the task force on the reorientation of United Nations public information activities which, in the view of the Secretary-General, should be implemented and by what means. In this regard, the Advisory Committee recalls that it was informed (during its consideration of the proposed programme budget) that the Secretary-General was currently reviewing the conclusions and recommendations of the task force and would submit his report on the issue for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

49. The Committee notes from paragraph 26.4 of the report that the majority of the 62 posts proposed for abolition are Local level (51) and that their functions are in administrative rather than substantive areas. However, the Committee was informed that the specific details for the abolition of the 51 posts and the placement of the incumbents into the integrated offices (to the extent possible) have still not been worked out. While not objecting to the proposed abolition of posts under this budget section, the Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will ensure that the capacity for communications and public information of those integrated offices which would be affected by the abolition of local posts is not diminished. Bearing in mind that, as stated above, specific details have not yet been worked out, the Committee cautions that abolitions should not be implemented until the capacity of each integrated office to carry out the public information and communication functions has been assured.

Section 27A. Administration, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management

50. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraphs 27A.3 and 27A.4 of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/303) that the Department of Management would shift its emphasis to one of determining management policies and that significant areas of administrative processing and decision-making would be delegated to and carried out where operations take place. The Advisory Committee notes, however, that there has been no direct reduction in posts related to this shift in focus nor a consequent decrease in administrative responsibilities; as indicated to the Committee by representatives of the Secretary-General, the transfer of the 17 posts mentioned in paragraph 27A.1 relate to those being redeployed to provide a staffing complement for the Executive Office for the new Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

51. Six additional posts have been proposed (two D-1, two P-5 and two General Service). The new structure of the Department, as proposed in paragraphs 27A.6 and 27A.7, would include a Management Policy Office, to be headed by a Director at the D-2 level with overall responsibilities for management reform and reporting. The D-2 post is proposed for redeployment from the former Financial Management Office, which would cease to exist as a separate office.

52. The Advisory Committee believes that the functions of the Office need to be carefully coordinated with the role of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in particular its monitoring and evaluation functions, so as to avoid duplication within the Secretariat. The Committee also believes that the Management Policy Office should function as an integrated unit and, in view of

the size of the unit, recommends that the staffing component should comprise one D-2, one D-1, three P-5 and two General Service posts.

III. APPROPRIATIONS RECOMMENDED

53. In the following table the Advisory Committee presents its recommendation on the level of appropriation for each section of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, based on its consideration of the proposed programme budget[1] and the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303). The Committee wishes to stress that in a number of instances it has, in the context of its observations and recommendations under chapter II of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, raised its concern with regard to the apparent lack of resources for a number of programmes and subprogrammes. The Advisory Committee has also indicated its concern with the widespread lack of justification for the abolition of posts (see chap. I of the Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget). While the Committee has not, in many instances, been in a position to quantify the resource implications of these concerns, it notes that, if concurred in by the General Assembly, they would be taken into account by the Secretary-General in the administration of the programme budget.

Comparative table of estimates as proposed by the Secretary-General and recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Budget section		Secretary-General's revised proposal (A/52/303)	Appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee
1A	Overall policy-making, direction and coordination	41 704 300	42 219 100
1B	General Assembly affairs and conference services	458 119 600	469 185 900
2A	Political affairs	41 882 100	42 080 700
2B	Disarmament	12 254 200	12 254 200
3	Peacekeeping operations and special missions	99 478 900	99 172 100
4	Peaceful uses of outer space	4 428 900	4 428 900
5	International Court of Justice	22 077 000	22 077 000
6	Legal affairs	33 528 300	33 478 800
7A	Economic and social affairs	110 427 700	110 427 700
8	Africa: New Agenda for Development	5 443 000	5 443 000
11A	Trade and development	105 657 900	105 657 900
11B	International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO	21 973 400	21 973 400
12	Environment	9 304 400	9 304 400
13	Human settlements	13 206 600	13 206 600
14	Crime control	6 029 200	6 029 200
15	International drug control	16 372 000	16 372 000
16	Economic and social development in Africa	90 771 600	90 771 600
17	Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific	73 408 100	73 408 100
18	Economic development in Europe	49 310 800	49 310 800
19	Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean	90 245 500	90 245 500

Budget section		Secretary-General's revised proposal (A/52/303)	Appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee
20	Economic and social development in Western Asia	49 704 800	49 704 800
21	Regular programme of technical cooperation	45 921 800	45 921 800
22	Human rights	46 138 700	46 121 700
23	Protection of and assistance to refugees	50 568 700	50 568 700
24	Palestine refugees	19 375 000	19 375 000
25	Humanitarian assistance	18 401 100	18 401 100
26	Communications and public information	139 009 000	139 009 000
27	Administrative services		
27A	Administration, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management	11 290 900	11 270 400
27B	Administration, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts	20 553 400	20 553 400
27C	Administration, Office of Human Resources Management	45 354 000	45 706 400[a]
27D	Administration, Support services	222 904 500	222 887 100[b]
27E	Administration, Conference services	-	-
27F	Administration, Geneva	112 860 100	112 860 100
27G	Administration, Vienna	34 415 600	43 326 900[c]
27H	Administration, Nairobi	11 891 400	11 891 400
28	Internal oversight	18 637 300	18 637 300
29	Jointly financed administrative activities	6 228 800	22 484 500[c]
30	Special expenses	53 720 800	53 720 800
31	Capital expenditures	35 893 400	35 893 400
32	Staff assessment	321 804 300	332 814 800
34	Development account	12 702 700	12 702 700[i]
	Total estimates of expenditure	2 582 999 800	2 630 898 200

Budget section		Secretary-General's revised proposal (A/52/303)	Appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee
Estimates of income			
1	Income from staff assessment	[j]	340 115 400
2	General income	[j]	71 369 100
3	Services to the public	[j]	5 271 400
	Total estimates of income	[j]	416 755 900
	Total net expenditure		2 214 142 300

[a] Includes $627,000 for the transfer of posts for the secretariat of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the regular budget: see para. I.7, chap. II, of the first report of the Advisory Committee on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

[b] Provisional, pending a decision by the General Assembly with regard to the recommendation to establish a post of Deputy Secretary-General.

[c] See the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on net budgeting below.

[d] Includes restoration of a P-3 post under subprogramme 7: see para. II.13, chap. II, of the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

[e] The Secretary-General has withdrawn his proposal to establish a P-4 post in the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan; the amount reflects the consequent reduction in the estimates.

[f] Provisional: see para. IV.3, chap. II, of the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

[g] Includes restoration of P-4 and General Service (Other level) posts under section 27C: see para. VIII.34, chap. II, of the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

[h] Reflects the recommendation against reclassification of a D-1 to D-2: see para. VIII.117, chap. II, of the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

[i] See the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the Development Account below.

[j] Not provided in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/303).

IV. NET BUDGETING

54. The issue of net budgeting was discussed by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs I.43 to I.45 of chapter II of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/7 (chap. II, Part I)). Subsequently, a report on net budgeting was submitted by the Secretary-General on 10 November 1997 (A/C.5/52/15). In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the report of the Secretary-General is not responsive to the concerns raised in the Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. For example, in paragraphs 6 to 9 of his report, he fails to address the issue raised by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 45 of its first report that in order to advance funds to the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Inspection Unit pending receipt of contributions from the participating agencies, the United Nations would need legal authority to exceed the amounts actually appropriated. Moreover, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report does not provide an adequate analysis of the requirements of the statutes of the Joint Inspection Unit and the International Civil Service Commission as requested by the Committee in paragraph 45 of its report. Under the circumstances, the Committee intends to revert to the issue of net budgeting early in its winter session for 1998. That being the case, the General Assembly may wish to defer taking a decision on the matter. Pending further consideration and taking into account the provisions of financial regulation 3.2 and financial rule 103.1, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Assembly restore the amounts "netted out"; the implications would be an addition of $11,066,300 under section 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services, $8,911,300 under section 27G, Administration, Vienna, and $16,255,700 under section 29, Jointly financed administrative activities, offset by increases in the same total amount under income section 2, General income, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. An additional amount of $10.9 million would be required under section 32, Staff assessment, offset by income of the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. This has been reflected in the table above.

V. DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

55. As can be seen in the table above, the Advisory Committee recommends an appropriation of $12.7 million in respect of the development account, as requested by the Secretary-General, to be placed provisionally in a new section 34. However, the Committee points out that the General Assembly has not yet acted upon the recommendation of the Secretary-General to establish such an account. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that there are a number of issues related to the "dividend for development" that must be examined in detail, including those raised in paragraph 30 (c) of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The information contained in the report of the Secretary-General in his report of 31 October 1997 (A/51/950/Add.5) is not sufficient for a detailed technical examination and the Advisory Committee understands that the Secretary-General will issue a detailed report in the near future. The Advisory Committee would revert to this matter, on the basis of that report, early in its winter session for 1998.

VI. PERSONNEL MATTERS

56. In paragraph 84 of chapter I of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999,[3] the Advisory Committee requested information on the number of Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General posts in the United Nations and its funds and programmes in 1987 as compared with 1997. Complete information in this regard has still not been received. Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee notes a tendency towards an increasing number of such positions. The Committee also recalls its statement on a decrease in the number of junior-level posts in paragraph 77 of chapter I of its first report;[3] it notes that this trend appears to continue and is distorting the grade "pyramid". The Committee therefore requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on the grading structure early in 1998, to include the information previously requested and provide the necessary analysis and justification for the numbers of posts at each level and the resultant organizational structure.

57. The Advisory Committee has been informed that the number of vacant posts is expected to continue to exceed the requirement to abolish posts. Under these circumstances, the Advisory Committee expects that every measure will be taken to avoid involuntary separation of staff. In this connection, it recalls its statements in paragraphs 27 and 28 of its second report on the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/51/7/Add.1) that, in this regard, the Advisory Committee points out that the related repercussions, including financial ones, of involuntary separation may well outweigh potential savings for the budget. Moreover, decisions to effect involuntary separation of staff should be taken with due regard to the accountability of senior officials for the implications - financial and otherwise - of their actions, should those actions be subject to judicial or administrative review.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/52/6/Rev.1).

[2] Ibid., Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/51/6/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Add.1).

[3] Ibid., Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/52/7).